

## Message Text

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ACTION EUR-25

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JANUARY 23, 1974.

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, U.K. (N.I.)

SUBJECT: HARRY WEST ELECTED UNIONIST PARTY LEADER

REF: BELFAST 8

SUMMARY: ULSTER UNIONIST ASSEMBLY PARTY LEADER HARRY WEST  
WAS ELECTED LEADER OF UNIONIST PARTY JAN 22 IN STANDING  
COMMITTEE MEETING. FAULKNERITES GENERALLY STAYED AWAY OR  
ABSTAINED. WEST OPPOSES NEW PAN-LOYALIST PARTY AND URGES  
PAISLEY AND CRAIG AND THEIR FOLLOWERS TO RETURN TO ORTHODOX  
UNIONIST FOLD. HIS PARTY OPPOSES CONSTITUTION ACT AND  
EXECUTIVE POWERSHARING WITH REPUBLICANS, BUT THROUGH CONSTITUTIONAL  
MEANS. EVENTS AT ASSEMBLY SITTING JANUARY 22 PUT SEVERE STRAIN  
ON HIS PARTY'S UNITY AND ITS COLLABORATION WITH LOYALIST  
COALITION. WEST'S RELATIVELY NON-DYNAMIC PERSONALITY AND  
PRESSURE OF EVENTS ARE LIKELY TO LEAD TO CONTINUED VARIETY OF  
STRATEGIES AND TACTICS ON PART OF ANTI-CONSTITUTION LOYALIST-  
UNIONISTS. END SUMMARY.

1. STANDING COMMITTEE OF ULSTER UNIONIST COUNCIL JANUARY 22

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ELECTED (UNPEDGED) ULSTER UNIONIST ASSEMBLY PARTY LEADER HARRY

WEST AS LEADER OF UNIONIST PARTY, REPLACING BRIAN FAULKNER  
WHO RESIGNED JANUARY 7.

2. ABOUT 170 OF STANDING COMMITTEE'S 270-ODD MEMBERS ATTENDED  
MOST FAULKNERITES ABSENTED SELVES FROM MEETING IN ORDER NOT  
TO APPEAR TO APPROVE CHANGE IN POLICIES AND LEADERSHIP, BUT  
LORD BROOKEBOROUGH AND SOME OTHERS WERE THERE AS OBSERVERS.  
IT WAS UNOFFICIALLY REPORTED THAT WEST OBTAINED 85 VOTES TO  
43 FOR HIS ONLY OPPONENT, SOUTH ANTRIM WESTMINSTER M.P. JAMES  
MOLYNEUX, WITH 12 SPOILED BALLOTS AND 28 ABSTENTIONS.

3. WEST IS WEALTHY 55-YEAR-OLD FARMER FROM COUNTY FERMANAGH.  
HE WAS TWICE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE, FIRST IN MID-60'S  
UNTIL PRIME MINISTER O'NEILL SACKED HIM IN 1967 FOR VIOLATION  
OF CODE PROHIBITIONG CONFLICTS OF INTEREST BY CABINET MEMBERS  
AND AGAIN IN 1971-72 IN FAULKNER GOVERNMENT. BETWEEN THESE  
PERIODS IN OFFICE HE FORMED AND LED STRONGLY RIGHT-WING WEST  
ULSTER UNIONIST COUNCIL. WEST IS SAID TO BE LIKEABLE AND NOT  
PARTICULARLY AMBITIOUS PERSONALLY. HE REPORTEDLY DID NOT SEEK  
PARTY LEADERSHIP.

4. THERE HAS BEEN NO OVERWHELMINGLY OBVIOUS SUCCESSOR TO  
FAULKNER FROM AMONG PROMINENT UNIONISTS WHO OPPOSE CONSTITUTION  
ACT, POWER-SHARING EXECUTIVE, AND COUNCIL OF IRELAND. MOST  
CHARISMATIC OF UNPLEDGED UNIONIST ASSEMBLYMEN, JOHN TAYLOR,  
HAD REFUSED TO RUN BECAUSE HE WAS TOO YOUNG. LEADER OF WESTMINSTER  
UNIONIST PARTY, CPT. LAWRENCE ORR, AND ORANGE GRAND MASTER,  
REV. MARTIN SMYTH, ALSO DECLINED. THERE WAS TALK OF DIVIDING  
LEADERSHIP BETWEEN ASSEMBLY PARTY LEADER AND SOMEONE OUTSIDE  
ASSEMBLY AND THEREFORE SUPPOSEDLY IN CLOSER TOUCH WITH GRASS  
ROOTS. ULTIMATELY, IN JANUARY 21 VOTE, STANDING COMMITTEE  
REMAINED FAITHFUL TO UNIONIST TRADITION OF ACCEPTING AS LEADER  
THE CHOICE OF ITS STORMONT PARLIAMENTARY PARTY.

5. IN PRESS CONFERENCE AFTER HIS ELECTION, WEST DISCOURAGED  
TALK OF A NEW PAN-LOYALIST POLITICAL PARTY, AND URGED PAISLEY,  
CRAIG AND OTHERS WHO LEFT THE UNIONIST PARTY BECAUSE OF  
FAULKNER'S POLICIES TO RETURN TO THE PARTY NOW THAT IT HAS  
RETURNED TO ORTHODOXY. HE REITERATED REJECTION OF POWER-SHARING  
WITH REPUBLICANS ALTHOUGH HE WOULD NOT OBJECT TO FULL PARTICIPATION  
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OF CATHOLICS IN GOVERNMENT OF NORTHERN IRELAND IF THEY WOULD  
ABANDON REPUBLICANISM. HE DOES NOT RECOGNIZE EXECUTIVE, AND  
HIS ASSEMBLY PARTY WILL REFUSE TO BE A "LOYAL OPPOSITION" BUT HE  
REJECTS THE USE OF PHYSICAL VIOLENCE FOR POLITICAL PURPOSES. HE  
WANTS RESTORATION OF PRE-1972 STORMONT.

6. WITHIN FEW SHORT HOURS OF HIS ELECTION WEST'S LEADERSHIP  
WAS TESTED BY RIOTOUS ASSEMBLY SITTING. HIS PARTY HAD PLEDGED

TO WAVE "DIGNIFIED PROTEST" AGAINST NEW EXECUTIVE, BUT NO DISRUPTION. IN THE EVENT WEST AND MOST OF HIS TEN FOLLOWERS WERE NOT THERE, BUT ONE REPORTER SAID AT LEAST ONE FORCIBLY RESISTED EXPULSION FROM CHAMBER BYRUC: JOHN LAIRD MADE TOKEN RESISTANCE: JOHN TAYLOR OBSERVED EVENTS FROM GOVERNMENT BACK BENCHES BUT TOOK NO PART IN THEM: WHILE, ON OTHER HAND, NOMINAL UNPLEDGED UNIONIST JAMES KILFEDDER (WHO HAS ALWAYS SAT DEEP IN OPPOSITION BACKBENCHES AND PLAYED LONE WOLF) EFFECTIVELY RECOGNIZED EXECUTIVE BY TABLING SEVERAL QUESTIONS TO SOME OF ITS MEMBERS.

7. COMMENT: A. WEST IS NOT NEARLY SO ARTICULATE OR SO AMBITIOUS AS HIS PREDECESSOR BRIAN FAULKNER, AND WILL NOT DOMINATE UNIONIST PARTY AS FAULKNER DID FOR NEARLY THREE YEARS. THERE WILL BE A DE FACTO COLLECTIVE LEADERSHIP, WITH CONSIDERABLE VARIATIONS BY INDIVIDUAL UNIONISTS. B. WEST'S ORTHODOX UNIONISM AND DIFFERENT LOYALIST VIEWS ON TACTICS TO BE PURSUED IN OPPOSITION TO EXECUTIVE MAKE PAN-LOYALIST POLITICAL PARTY UNLIKELY IN FORESEEABLE FUTURE. C. ASSEMBLY SITTING POINTED UP DIVISIONS WITHIN WEST'S ULSTER UNIONIST ASSEMBLY PARTY AND BETWEEN CONSTITUION STRATEGY AND TACTICS.

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